



Chairman Julius Genachowski
Commissioner Meredith Attwell Baker
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Robert M. McDowell

Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: GN Docket No. 09-191

December 8, 2009

Dear Chairman Genachowski and Commissioners:

The United States Distance Learning Association (USDLA), we are proud to say, was the first nonprofit distance learning association in the United States to support distance learning research, development and praxis across the complete arena of education, training and communications. The learning communities that USDLA represents are: pre K-12, higher education, continuing education, corporate training, military and government training, home schooling and telemedicine. USDLA, through its mission of supporting the development and application of distance learning, focuses on all legislation impacting the distance learning community and its varied constituencies.

Distance learning has become an increasingly popular and effective mode of instruction for students of all ages. A Nickelodeon study found that 85% of school age children use the Internet to help them do better in school. College students are receiving college credit and earning their degrees over the Internet, often from distant universities. Adults are continuing their education from the convenience of their home computers, as they may not have time to juggle attending classes in-person. And finally, among its most important benefits, millions of American workers are being retrained online, which saves corporations millions of dollars annually, while keeping American workers competitive and prepared for today's technology challenges.

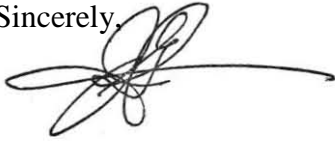
As we mentioned in a previous filing on the National Broadband Plan, distance learning is particularly important to those living in rural and low-income areas. The Office of Educational Technology, which is housed by the Department of Education, found that 46% of districts in rural areas were taking advantage of distance learning opportunities and that 42% of school districts using distance education were high poverty districts.

We are concerned that the Commission's open Internet proceeding could have a detrimental impact on the future of distance learning. Net neutrality could limit private sector investment, which would be especially damaging to the rural communities where applications like distance learning and telemedicine are the most needed. The Commission should focus on the continued deployment and adoption of broadband technology, rather than policies that will limit its reach.

Furthermore, in order for distance learning to be most effective, broadband connections are necessary. Computers in homes, schools, libraries, and community centers must be able to stream video and audio without jitter or delay. Distance learning requires the same quality of education that students receive in the classroom. Smart networks are essential for the efficient and expedient delivery of educational information.

In order for distance learning to continue to flourish as an affordable and convenient tool for education, investment and smart networks will be imperative. We are concerned that new regulations could hinder network performance, which would ultimately impede educational opportunities for consumers. Instead, the Commission should focus on the goal of universal broadband access. Education is a critical resource that must be available to all Americans, regardless of where they live, and the public and private sectors both have key roles to play to enable future success in distance learning.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Flores', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

John G. Flores, Ph.D.
Executive Director